

Lori Garver, NASA Deputy Administrator

Introduction of Frank Culbertson

NASA Remembers: The 10th Anniversary of 9/11

NASA Headquarters

September 13, 2011

What an honor to introduce the only American who was not on Earth on September 11, 2001 is here to speak to us today.

While Frank bore witness to the tragedy, NASA responded in many ways and we continue to pay tribute.

Immediately after the attacks, NASA science programs were called into action on behalf of the nation. The agency worked with FEMA to fly sensors over the affected areas on aircraft looking for aerial contaminants as well as satellite resources to monitor from above.

NASA also flew nearly 6,000 flags on Endeavour's flight during STS-108 to honor the victims of the attacks as well as their families and the thousands of brave men and women who contributed to the relief and recovery efforts.

In an effort called, "Flags for Heroes and Families," Students working at Johnson Space Center in Houston, assembled commemorative packages, including the U.S. flags flown in space, which were presented to relatives of the victims on National Flag Day in 2002.

Last February, the contributions of NASA and Kennedy Space Center were stitched into the fabric of the National 9-11 Flag, which was recovered near ground zero following the attacks.

As Representative Plazzo mentioned, at this very moment on the dust red surface of the planet Mars, a piece of metal from the World Trade Center is protecting the drilling mechanism of the Opportunity rover and has been doing so for more than seven years.

I actually found this out a few weeks ago while visiting New York City with the STS-135 crew.

In 2003, one of our contractors, Honeybee Robotics of New York City, obtained a piece of metal cut out of debris from the World Trade Center, and in a gesture of tribute to the victims and survivors of the tragedy, adorned the metal pieces with an American flag and included them as a functional part of the Spirit and Opportunity rovers.

It is now my privilege and honor to introduce the only American not on earth on September 11, 2001, wrote a letter describing his reaction to the unfolding tragedy. He said...

“Other than the emotional impact of our country being attacked and thousands of our citizens and maybe some friends being killed, the most overwhelming feeling being where I am is one of isolation.”

While we all felt a bit of that at first, within a few hours we had the opportunity to gather our children and hold them in our arms. You had no opportunity.

On that awful day, astronaut Frank Culbertson was hundreds of miles above the earth as commander of the Expedition Three mission to the International Space Station.

While circling the earth, he had the presence of mind to grab a video camera to document from his unique vantage point the destruction that was occurring below.

His photos and memories of that day have become an important part of the history and healing of our nation.

Frank Culbertson has had an 18-year career as a NASA astronaut, logging over 144 days in space as shuttle commander, pilot and station crew member.

He retired from NASA in 2002 and is now Senior Vice President and Deputy General Manager with Orbital Sciences Corporation, one of our key industry partners.

How appropriate it is that Frank's experience offers us a unique perspective on this event – after all that is what we do – we provide a unique and important perspective on our Nation, our planet, and our Universe.

Frank, thank you for joining us for this important remembrance event.

Please run the video.